

Goldie at Home Activity: Flower Power



Activity Overview: Ah, the sweet smell of spring - it's such a refreshing time! The warm sunshine feels so good on my feathers, and melts away the winter blues. As colorful blooms are popping up, today's Goldie at Home activity focuses on the act of preserving and drying flowers. The craft was popular with Victorians, people who lived during the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901, who loved to bring nature into their home and decorate with items that could be found outside.

Connection to Iowa History

Charles Edwin Bessey dried numerous plants and flowers throughout his life. Bessey taught at Iowa Agricultural College, today known as Iowa State College, between 1870 to 1884. He held several teaching positions, including that of botany professor and acting president of the college. During his time at Iowa State, he created the first undergraduate botanical laboratory in the United States, and established Iowa State University's herbarium which is a collection of preserved plants, like the dried flowers created in today's activity.

Instructions

- 1 Gather flowers.** Head outside and gather some fresh flowers, plants or even weeds, like dandelions. Flat-headed flowers are easiest to press. Large flowers, like roses or tulips, should be split down the middle to help it flatten.
- 2 Lay it flat.** Place the flower between two sheets of parchment paper or white printer paper. Be sure the paper covers the entire flower. If using printer paper, make sure it is plain white and texture-free. If making more than one pressed flower, repeat this step for each flower. These can be placed in various pages throughout the book.
- 3 Weigh it down.** Close the book firmly. Place the papers inside a heavy book or lay weights on top of the paper. Make sure there is even pressure on the paper.
- 4 Apply more pressure.** Add additional books or objects to weigh it down, and set it in a place where it can sit undisturbed.

Instructions continued on the next page

Materials

- Fresh flowers, plants or weeds
- Parchment paper or printer paper
- Heavy books or weights
- **Optional:** Construction paper of assorted colors; Glue

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Instructions continued

- 5 **Wait.** Leave the flowers undisturbed until dry. This will take two to three weeks.
- 6 **Remove.** After the flowers have dried, carefully remove them from the book.
- 7 **Display.** Decide what you would like to do with your dried flowers. A creative option is to glue the dried flowers to colorful construction paper to create a piece of art to display in your home. You could even create a card to give to someone featuring your flowers. Be creative!
- 8 **Share.** If you would like to share your creation with the State Historical Museum of Iowa, please email photos to museum.education@iowa.gov. We want to share your creation with other young historians!
- 9 **Questions to Spark Learning**
 - Why do you think it is important to collect different types of flowers and plants like Charles Edwin Bessey?
 - What can you learn from the plants that grow near you? Think about time of year, sun, shade and water availability.
 - Why do people like to have plants in their homes? What benefits do they bring?
- 10 **Additional Resources**

If your young historian has taken a liking to botany (study of plants, flowers), explore these additional resources below.

 - Check out the State Historical Society of Iowa's Flickr album featuring [Cornelia Clarke's botanical negatives](#).
 - Explore the State Historical Museum of Iowa's [online catalog](#) and search "herbarium."
 - Listen to a webcast to virtually explore the [Ada Hayden Herbarium at Iowa State University](#) with Iowa Master Gardeners. Charles Edwin Bessey started this collection while working at the college in the 1800s.
 - Learn more about the [Ada Hayden Herbarium](#) which contains over 600,000 specimens of vascular plants, bryophytes, fungi and lichens.